

VAL BIRO

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**THE  
ADVENTURES  
OF A VINTAGE CAR**

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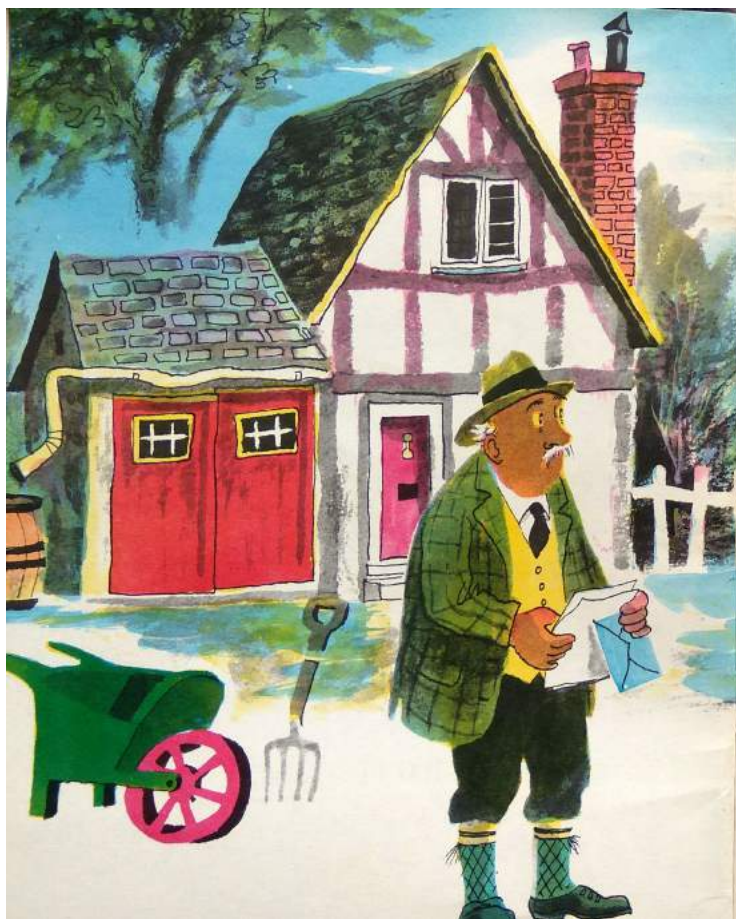
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*Story and pictures by Val Biro*



A PICCOLO PICTURE BOOK



DAN BOON LTD LONDON

THERE WAS ONCE A CAR CALLED GUMDROP.

He was a very old car, and his proper name was Austin Clifton Twelve-Four. But everybody called him Gumdrop. He belonged to Mr Oldcastle, who kept him polished and greased and oiled, and used to drive him proudly round the countryside.

Mr Oldcastle was rather lonely. One day his daughter invited him to come and live with her in the town. But she had no room for Gumdrop in her garage.

'I shall have to sell Gumdrop,' thought Mr Oldcastle sadly. 'However, I will take off his splendid brass horn and keep it to remember him by.'

And this is exactly what he did.

So Gumdrop was sold to Mr Pluggett's Garage.

'An old crock like this isn't much use to anyone,' said Mr Pluggett. 'But someone might want his instruments - his speedometer,



his ammeter



and his clock.

I'll take them out and try and sell them separately.'

And this is exactly what he did.



Gumdrop was left out in Mr Pluggett's yard. It was a sad change from Mr Oldcastle's warm garage with the red door. Nobody came to look at him. Nobody wanted to buy him.

One day two men ran breathlessly into the yard. They were burglars, escaping from the police.

'This car will do for our get-away,' said one of them. 'No one will miss an old crock like this.'

So they jumped into Gumdrop, started up the engine, and drove out of the garage yard and down the road.



An Austin Clifton Twelve-Four is a difficult car to drive if you are not used to it. And it is especially difficult if you are trying to escape from the police. Gumdrops lurched from one side of the road to the other, his brakes and gears making a dreadful noise.

Then, in the middle of the High Street, they saw a policeman, holding up his hand. 'I can't stop,' cried the driver.



With a sharp squeal (the brakes), a big cr-r-runch (the wings), a loud bang (the front tyres), a gurgling hiss (the radiator), and a dull clang (the headlamps), Gumdrops went straight into the window of Mr Moppet the greengrocer.

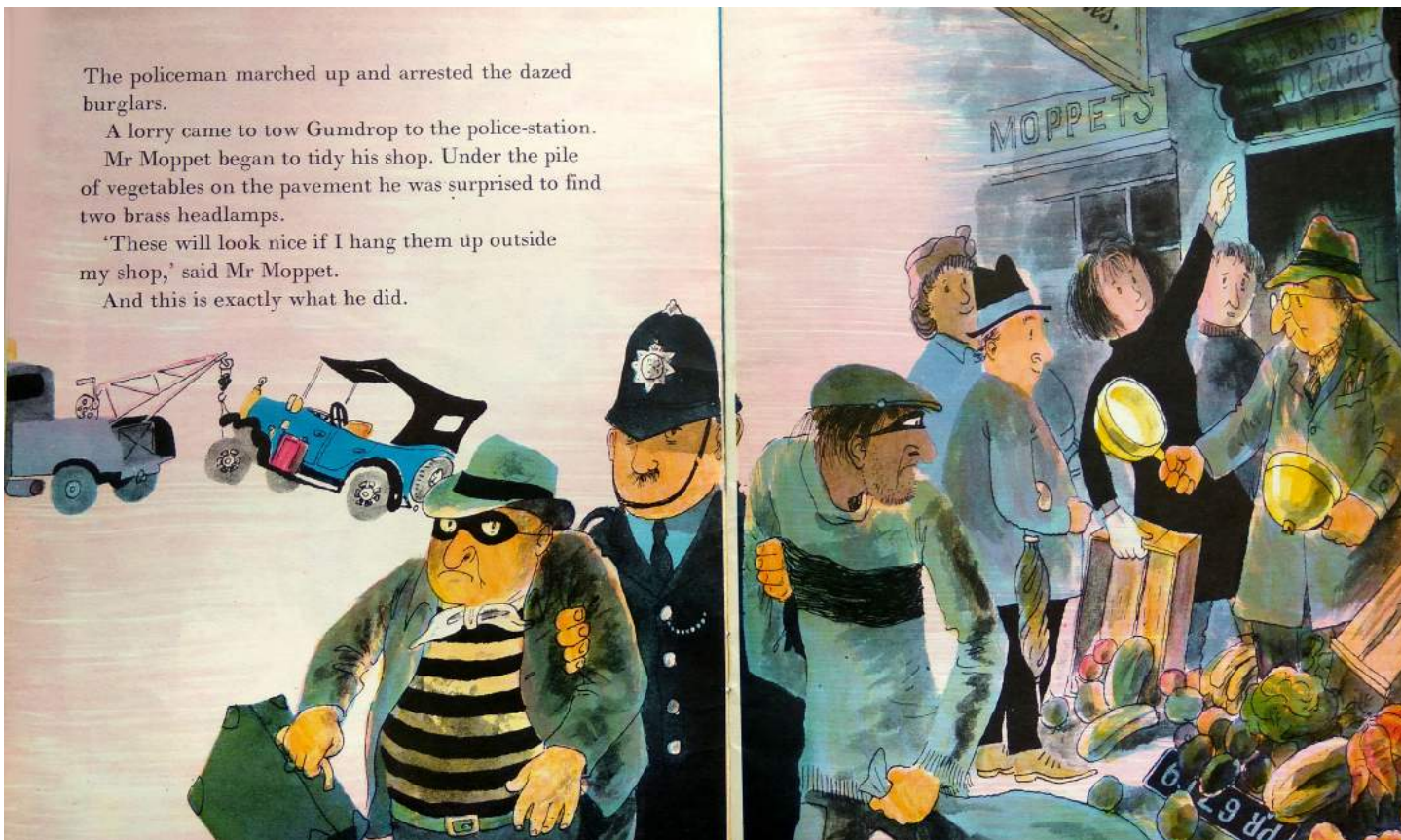
The policeman marched up and arrested the dazed burglars.

A lorry came to tow Gumdrop to the police-station.

Mr Moppet began to tidy his shop. Under the pile of vegetables on the pavement he was surprised to find two brass headlamps.

'These will look nice if I hang them up outside my shop,' said Mr Moppet.

And this is exactly what he did.





The police sergeant was a kind man. He knew a good Austin Clifton Twelve-Four when he saw one.

'But we can't keep you here,' he said. 'The superintendent doesn't believe in old cars. However, we'd like to take out your engine and battery and use them to drive our cement mixer.'

And this is exactly what they did.

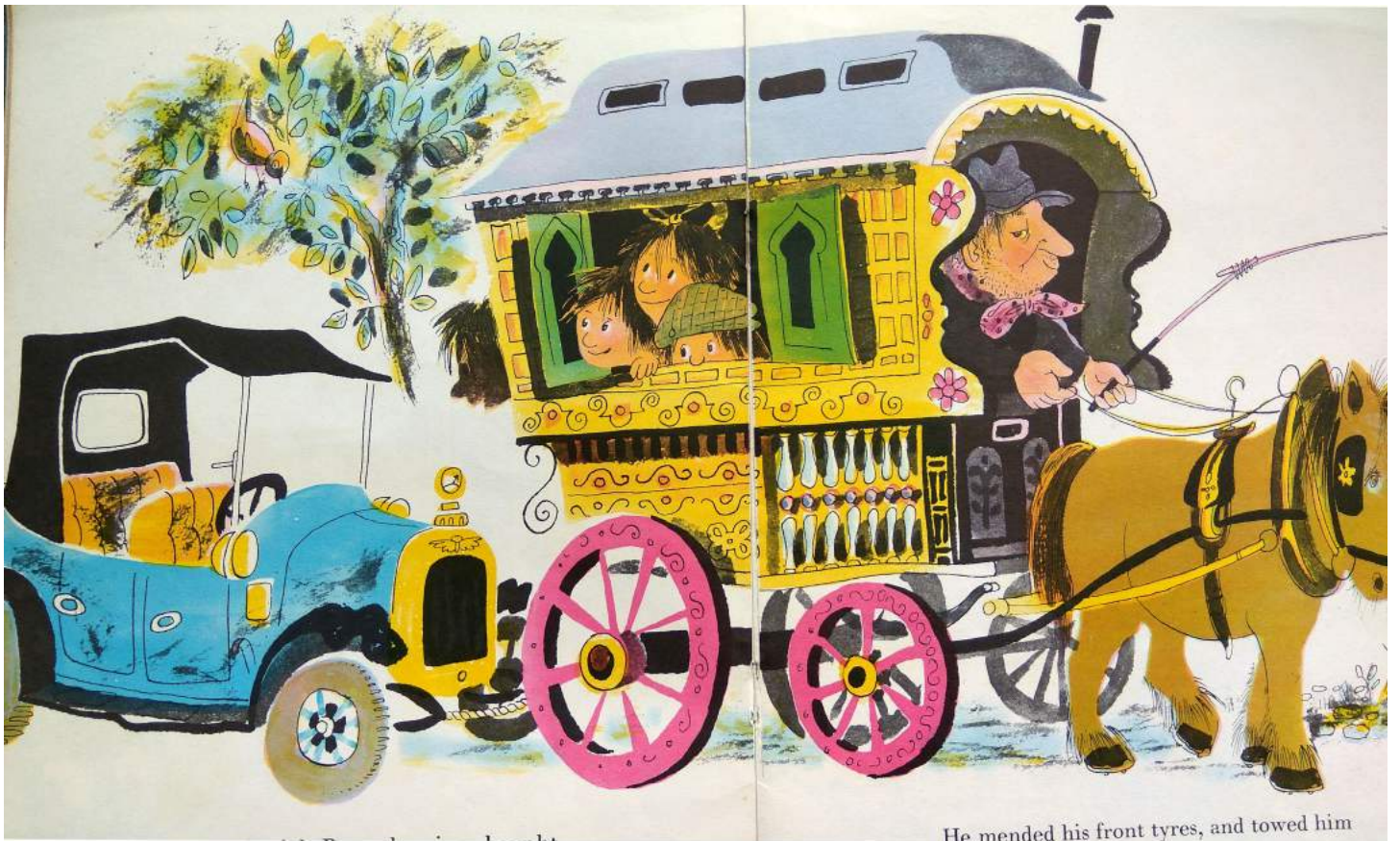
Poor Gumdrops! Mr Oldcastle had kept his horn. He had lost his instruments at Pluggett's, his headlamps at Moppet's, and now his engine and battery had been taken out too.

That afternoon the lorry came and towed him away to a yard with a field behind it, littered with old, worn-out cars, wheels, engines, and scrap of every description. This was the final indignity for a rare vintage car like Gumdrops, an original Austin Clifton Twelve-Four. All day and all night for many weeks Gumdrops stood in the field among the scrap.



One day a gipsy man saw Gumdrops in the field. He examined his wheels and his seat and his hood. 'This is just what I want to tow behind my caravan and carry all my extra gear,' said Mr Zachariah Rosa.





He mended his front tyres, and towed him





One day, as Mr Rosa's horse Cherry pulled the caravan (with Gumdrop behind), a motor-cycle whizzed past with a bang-bang, just missing them. Cherry took fright and bolted. The caravan lurched, and fell into a ditch,

Mr Rosa and his wife and children got out and stood disconsolately in the road, wondering what to do.

'We'll have to take off your wheels and put them on the caravan,' said Mr Rosa to Gumdrop.

And this is exactly what they did. Since they could no longer tow Gumdrop without wheels, they left him by himself in a field.

So Gumdrop was all alone again. Mr Oldcastle had kept his horn. He had lost his instruments at Pluggett's and his headlamps at Moppet's. The police were using his engine and his battery, and now his wheels were gone as well.



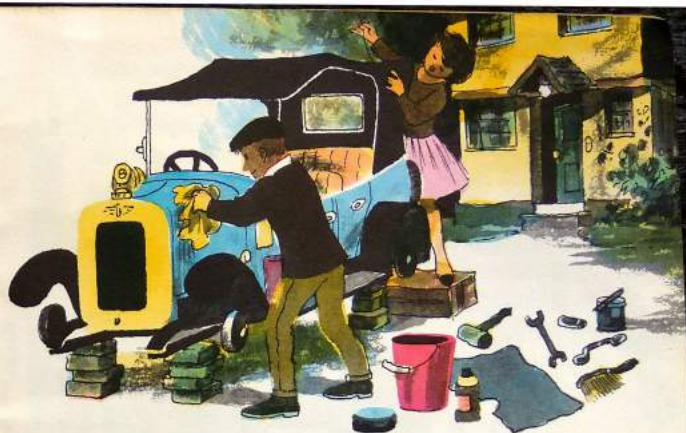
However, he was not alone for long. Mr Alfred Blops, who walked the countryside as a tramp, thought that Gumdrops would make an excellent temporary home. So he brushed Gumdrops upholstery and kept his inside clean, and there he used to sleep at night.



One morning, just as Mr Blops was getting up, a man appeared at the gate of the field.

'Excuse me,' said the man. 'I am a vintage car enthusiast and I have been looking for just such a model to rebuild for next year's vintage car competition. My name is Bill McArran. Would you sell your car to me?'

Mr Blops accepted the money with dignified pleasure. He was sad to lose his home, but proud that the car which he had kept so tidy and clean would once more be used for its proper purpose.



So Bill McArran brought a lorry to collect Gumdrops, and took him to his home. The next day he started work. He straightened the dents in Gumdrops wings. He polished the sides, and his wife mended the hood.

After weeks of hard work Gumdrops stood shining as good as new – but he had no wheels, no engine, no battery, no lamps, no instruments (speedometer, ammeter and clock), and no horn.

'I can't find these things just anywhere,' said Bill. 'They aren't sold any more. Anyway a car cannot enter the competition unless all its parts were made at the same time as the car itself was built.'



Bill searched for a long time, until one day when he was in the High Street of a nearby town he saw, outside a greengrocer's shop, two shiny brass headlamps.

Mr Moppet explained how he had found them and was quite willing to sell them when he heard that Gumdrop was being rebuilt. So Gumdrop got his lamps back.

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Down the road Bill saw a garage and thought he would buy some cables for the lamps. Mr Pluggett said, 'I had an old crock like yours once. The police towed him away and I said I didn't want him any more. But I've still got the instruments.'

And Mr Pluggett brought out Gumdrops's speedometer, his ammeter, and his clock.

So Gumdrops got his instruments back.

'Yes,' said the sergeant of police. 'We kept the car's engine to drive our cement mixer. We've finished the job now. You are welcome to have it if you like.'

So Gumdrops got his engine and his battery back.

Then the sergeant explained how Gumdrops had been left with the scrap merchant. Perhaps that was where Bill would find four 21-inch, six-stud Sankey wheels to fit Gumdrops.

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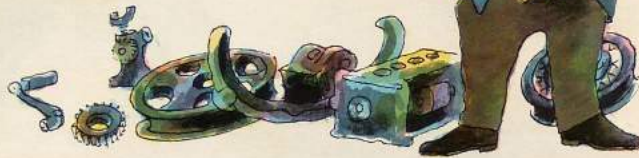
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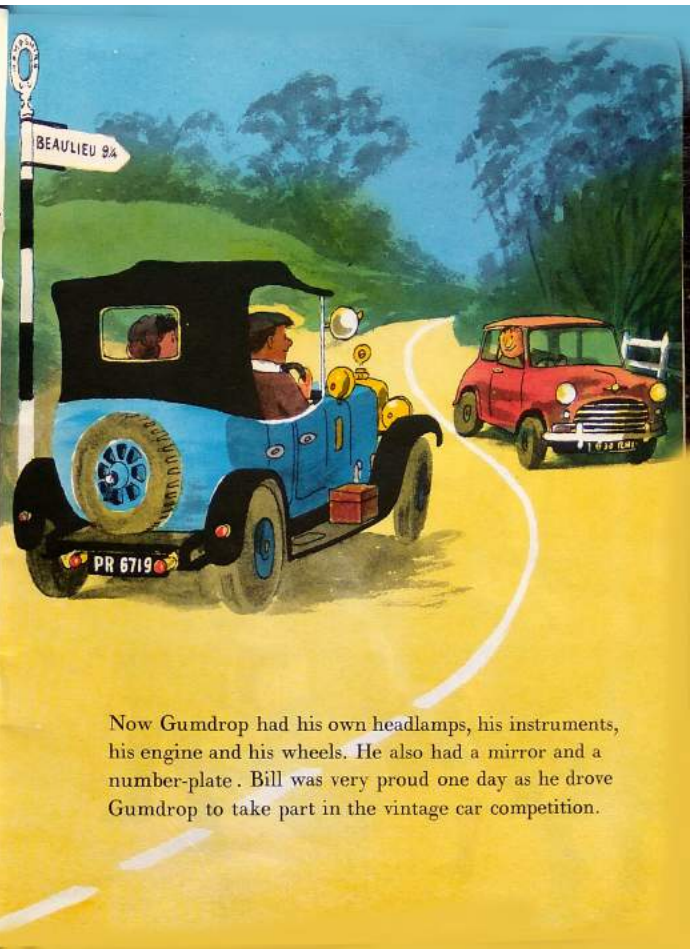
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'No,' said Mr Brett the scrap merchant. 'I haven't got any wheels like that. The last I had were on a car I sold to Mr Rosa. He is camping in the next field to mine. He might still have them.'



'Why, yes,' said Mr Rosa. 'I've got the wheels on my old caravan. I have a new one now. You can have the wheels if you like.'

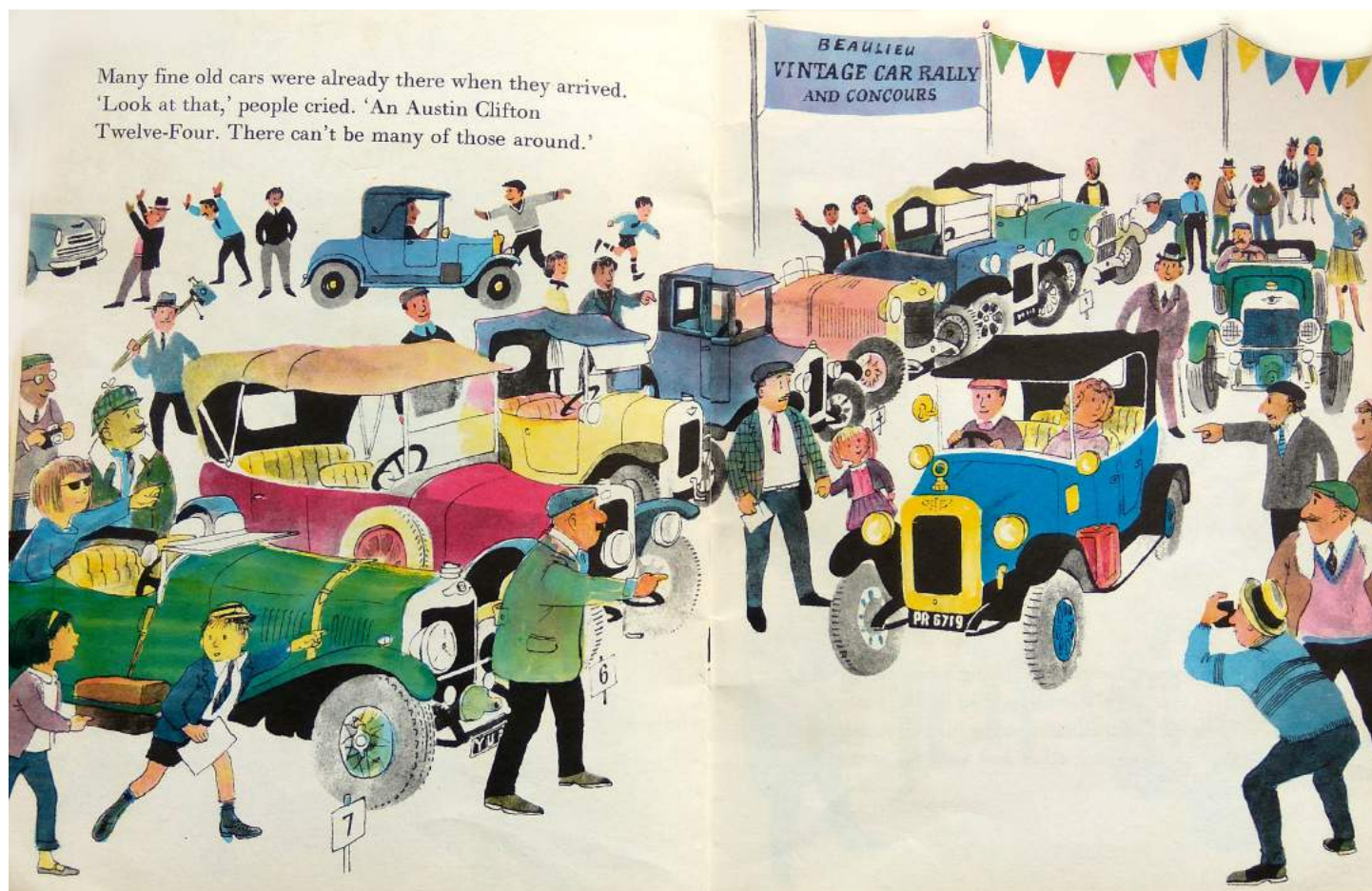
And so Gumdrops got his wheels back.



Now Gumdrops had his own headlamps, his instruments, his engine and his wheels. He also had a mirror and a number-plate. Bill was very proud one day as he drove Gumdrops to take part in the vintage car competition.



Many fine old cars were already there when they arrived.  
'Look at that,' people cried. 'An Austin Clifton  
Twelve-Four. There can't be many of those around.'





The judging began. Two stern-looking men came round. They opened Gumdrop's doors, peered inside, looked under the bonnet and made long notes in their notebooks. Then they nodded to each other and went on to the next car.

Towards evening, an announcement was heard. 'Ladies and gentlemen, the judging is now completed. In the opinion of the judges the first prize must go to the 1926 Austin Clifton Twelve-Four, belonging to Mr Bill McArran.' There were cheers. Bill slapped Gumdrop on the bonnet in his joy.

'And now,' went on the announcer, 'the prize will be presented by the President of our Club, Mr Oldcastle.'





Mr Oldcastle! Gumdrop's first owner. He handed Bill the silver cup. Then he opened a small case.

'As a small additional prize,' said Mr Oldcastle, 'allow me to give you a piece of equipment which I believe is the only original part still missing.' And he pulled out from his case Gumdrop's shiny brass horn.

So Gumdrop got his horn back too.

